

REMARKS

Summary of the Office Action

Claims 23-38 have been considered in the Office Action.

Claims 23-38 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Thackston, U.S. Patent No. 6,295,513 (“Thackston”), in view of Hill U.S Patent No. 5,970,471 (“Hill”), and further view of Huberman U.S. Patent No. 5,826,244 (“Huberman”).

Reply

Independent claims 23 and 31 recite systems and methods for forming a contract for completing a print job, the systems and methods receiving a user-supplied set of constraints regarding a print job project, storing the set of constraints in a database as an object, creating a plurality of instances of the object, each instance uniquely associated with a corresponding vendor, and communicating each instance of the object to its corresponding associated vendor. The cited references do not describe or suggest the claimed invention.

The Office action at 3-4 states that: (1) Thackston teaches using web browser templates to submit an RFQ form; (2) the RFQ form includes constraints, such as quantity requirements, etc.; and (3) the vendors’ responses and iterative responses during negotiations correspond to “creating a plurality of instances wherein each instance is uniquely associated with a corresponding vendor.” Applicants respectfully submit that even if all of these assertions are correct, the cited references still do not describe or suggest the claimed invention.

As previously mentioned, a prime contractor/designer may solicit a request for quote (“RFQ”) to fabricators (i.e., vendors) for out-sourcing the manufacture of a part, and the vendors may submit bids in response to the RFQ. If, as the Office action states, the vendors’ responses and iterative responses to the RFQ correspond to “creating a plurality of instances [of the object] wherein each instance is uniquely associated with a corresponding vendor,” then the additional limitation in claims 23 and 31 of “communicating each instance of the object to its corresponding associated vendor” seemingly would make no sense. Although it is logical to assume that a vendor

would communicate its RFQ response to the prime contractor/designer who actually solicited the RFQ, it's unclear why a responding vendor would ever communicate the vendor's own response to itself.

Applicants respectfully submit that if all of the claim limitations are viewed collectively (and not in piecemeal fashion), the Examiner will agree that the cited references do not describe or suggest the claimed invention.

Conclusion

For the reasons stated above and in the response to the previous Office action, applicants submit that this application, including claims 23-38, is allowable. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner allow this application.

Respectfully submitted,



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